Brandeis Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
Call to Order, Approval of Minutes, Updates New Business (20-21, Faculty Survey)

Updates: We had the board of trustees meeting over the weekend. They are concerned about faculty issues. Some of the top issues are compensation cost of living, and workload.

We have our upcoming senate council meeting with the provost. Are there any concerns that you’d like us to bring up in the meeting?
Comment: I wanted to check in on spring plans, the 90 minute - 80-minute teaching load, as well as the pension contribution hold.

Comment: I wanted to raise an issue that came up in the last meeting. You had highlighted the discussion of faculty representation in university decision making.

There has been a lot of anger around the Center for Teaching and Learning. Wendy Cadge wanted us to run a faculty survey but I don't think it should come from us. Do you think it is the senate's responsibility to survey on the CTL?
Question: I'm wondering what the point of the survey is? Is it just to dig in the knife more deeply? The message has gotten through already.

Question: What are the specifics around the CTL issue?
Answer: The lack of effectiveness of the hybrid learning institute and the lack of communications/efficiency therein.

Comment: Improvement needed and it is a challenging task but the Senate should not be in the job of program evaluation. We should be in the position of advising the university on programs but I think it's a trap to become the evaluation body. On issues on faculty views on hybrid teaching was appropriate.
Response: Our role is shared governance, not necessarily operations.
Response: We can try to find out what the needs still are. I've been working with faculty to help them learn how to do things digitally, add a hyperlink, and such but I really shouldn't have to. We can generate a "to-do" list for the CTL.

Continued Discussion of surveying around the CTL.

We do have to do a Fall Survey. Can I have a few of you come up with questions?
Volunteers: Sabine Von Mering, Joel Cutcher Gershenfeld, and Monika Mitra.

We should run this soon. We will have three questions that are broadly about what the faculty want help with and are concerned about moving forward.

Comment: While preparing for the working group meeting on supporting Brandeis families, one of the reactions I got was that people were overwhelmed with surveys and didn't think that anything would come from them.
Response: We are required by the handbook to run a survey but I also think that our Spring survey was consulted by the administration and it made a difference. We just need to communicate that better. We have the chance to influence the spring as well as next summer and the next fall.

Comment: Part of the issues with the CTL is that they had one mandate but now they have two. The first mandate was to provide best practices on how best to teach and promote the kind of learning that is important. The CTL is trying to communicate this to very busy faculty. The ability to teach well is going to be critical to the bottom line. This has not gone away but on top of this there is the switch and changes to online teaching. Part of the difficulties this summer was choosing how to straddle both these mandates. This might be helpful in framing questions for the survey.

Comment: Regardless of what happens with the CTL and our concerns of the CTL, we could still be teaching online next semester or the semester after. We as faculty have to determine what teaching should look like digitally. I don't think we know what teaching is supposed to look like right now which I think is adding to the frustration.

Motion to approve the minutes
Approved

Send me suggestions on what you want in other meetings. We need to talk about anti-racist training in the next meeting. I also want us to keep talking about climate change.
Stewart Uretsky and Sam Solomon, University Financial Update

We have a short presentation that summarizes the budget for this year and we want to spend a little bit of time to team up on our budget planning. Then we can have time for questions. There are a few things I want to mention: the principles that underlie what we are doing are transparency. There are lots of questions and uncertainty and we want to be open and honest about what we know. The other principle is flexibility. Given the deep uncertainty of the situation we’ve got to be flexible. Another principle is being measured and making sure we are thinking about how and when to make our decisions. And the final principle is resiliency. We want to end the year in the strongest position that we can be. We also think a lot about our cash and making sure we can meet payroll, etc.

Presentation of University Finances

Overview of main revenue streams, projections of $35 million deficit. We are currently at a $38 million deficit. At the beginning of the summer we projected worse enrollment but that number could still change. We are also projecting out what our financial situation would be if we pivoted fully to remote and offered tuition discounts. It would be a $9 million-dollar decision at that point.

Looking at graduate net tuition, in Heller, GSAS, (20%) and IBS (40%) right now we are looking at large revenue shortfalls. In terms of room and board, our number of students on campus has gone down. Fundraising, we assumed in the summer we’d be down by 20% and they in fact came in down 20% and our projection looking forward remains the same. For additional COVID expenditures, we increased the projection by another $5 million which was for high frequency testing for the year.

Regarding mitigations for administrative departments, we are looking at an operational/non-salary budget reduction of 10% probably rising to 20%.

There is a chance that we might have to go fully remote and the effect of the budget might not be linear if that happens. Our projection right now includes a 10% discount on tuition but that would have to be approved by the board. Graduate revenue isn’t as impacted as much. Room and board are obviously affected. No impact on fundraising in that situation. The $5 million set aside for testing would go away with the students off campus. We might want to or have to go to a full remote situation and we might not give the d=tuition discount or depending on when reimburse room and board so that would change the budgetary effect.

Furloughs and layoffs are our last resort and would only come into play in the worst-case scenario that we’ve projected. Our social justice values would also affect how this would be addressed.
Comment: We are seeing a decrease in our overall discount rate, and with a lot of students who are not living on campus, they are getting less financial aid. If more students move off campus then the financial aid is adjusted and would go down as financial aid is based on the total cost of attendance (including room and board).

Comment: We also have also provided other forms of financial aid through the CARES Act and the emergency fund. Incoming students with need are eligible for laptop grants and we also provided laptops through the emergency fund.

Question: I wanted to know about the student numbers. Normally we would have 4000?
Answer: Normally we would have 3600 in the fall and just under 3600 in the spring. We basically have a normal enrollment but it is slightly down. We went from 2800 available beds to 2400 so each student would have their own room and we only have 1800ish beds taken.

Question: I heard from students that some students left their campus housing after coming to campus. Is this a lot or just a handful?
Answer: So far it is just a handful. We do have worries about these numbers shifting especially if students consider deferring in the spring. It would be great to hear from you if you are getting that sense from your students.

Comment: My son deferred and we’ve had discussions about why other people didn’t. From what he can tell, a lot of people are just going to plow through to keep their lives on track.
Comment: A note on deferrals, if you want to drop out in this semester, to get reimbursement they have to do so before the 5th week.

Comment: I have two students who decided to go entirely remote, they aren’t thinking about deferring but the on-campus option doesn’t make much sense if the classes are all online.
Comment: Over the summer we were hearing that students would have wanted to be on campus even if the courses were all remote so it’s interesting to hear that there is some roll back on that.

Question: Are the students who are remote now getting a discount?
Answer: No but if they are fully remote they are getting a discount on room and board since they aren’t paying. If we pivot to fully remote we might consider providing a discount for tuition but there is a lot of conversation about this and it is not something we would definitely do. We just want to know what the financial implication of it would be.

Question: Why is IBS twice as low as Heller and GSAS?
Answer: IBS have a lot of students from China who couldn't get visas.

Discussion around visas processing and starting the spring term in February which would help to give some cushion for visa processing.

Question: What is the rationale for potentially reducing tuition?
Answer: It is really not the same experience for the students. It's about how the students perceive the value of the experience and while the in-classroom value might be the same the overall experience is worse.

Question: Can you comment on the demographics of who is deferring and not? What I heard in the board meeting was that those students who were deferring were coming from places of privilege and those who were coming were coming for more places of need.
Answer: That is that case.

Question: Looking forward, with 2% enrollment down, we still have a pretty big hole. We are pulling more from the endowment; can you comment on this?
Answer: Right now, we are pulling from the endowment at 6.5% which is about a 1.5% more than we’d like. The goal is to grow the endowment over time in order to keep up with inflation. To return to normal (retirement matching, pay raises, normal/safe endowment draw) we’d need to have a $20-25 million budget swing. We are planning to taper down our endowment draw and are looking to increase the number of students on campus and potentially increase tuition, which we did not do this year.

Comment: A few thoughts: if there is a 10 million dollar swing from the number of students on campus then it's worth investing in student and campus life even in these COVID times. A second thing, there has been some discussion about a lifetime learning guarantee which might help reduce enrollment melt.

Motion to delay the by-law discussion to the next meeting
Approved

Comment: There are returns on investment that we can get if we invest more in teaching. My students seem to be pretty happy with life on campus but if we are hearing about students deferring because of the online teaching it might be worth looking into.

Comment: There may be some mid-year students joining us.
Response: There are a number of students who deferred for just one semester.
Question: I've heard a lot about the retirement matching and benefits. For some of us we came to Brandeis and we signed a contract that laid out the benefits and matching. When you are looking at budget planning for the future are you including the retirement plan in the baseline?

Answer: Yes, our baseline looking forward includes the retirement plan and is more similar to our original budget. There are other things that we don't have in our current budget baseline, such as tuition increases and pay increases.

Comment: From a planning perspective it is reasonable to imagine a vaccine will be available by the middle of next calendar year which would be important to the return to a normal operating budget by next year. As information changes we will continue to re-forecast for the future.

Question: If things improve greatly this year will we see both raises and retirement matching back on the table?

Answer: It is theoretically possible but there is still a lot of uncertainty. We won’t necessarily be in the ‘clear’ until next July.

Question: Are there ongoing efforts to find other budget saving areas and efficiencies?

Answer: Yes

Answer: One area that will save money will be that there probably won’t be study abroad in the spring.

Question: What about land lease or sale? Have we been able to look at these at all?

Answer: In practical terms we haven't had the opportunity to go into these as deep as we will. Some of these ideas are long-term and don’t really play into the short-term budget reallocation. There is also a desire to make some progress on the Framework for the Future. While we are focusing on keeping the lights on we also are keeping eyes to the future. There are a lot of uncertainties about the changes that have occurred in the last 6 months and which of them are structural in nature and have to be taken into the baseline.

Comment: I'm getting two takeaways from this: everything that we can do about teaching and learning we should do. And we've got new insights into how important student life is. I would like to add the importance of research dollars that are coming into the university.

Question on intersession and summer

Comment: We know that as a university we have to grow revenue if we want to spend more. Two ways to do this would be to offer intersession and beef up the summer offerings. What are we doing institutionally to plan for this? Another question, outside of
the contracts we control, will we see furloughs and lay-offs in places like Sodexo?

Question: For the summer and intersession expansion, I’m probably not the best person to talk on this but perhaps bring it up to Lisa?

Answer: Having taught summer in the past, the teaching in the summer didn’t count towards my teaching hours and we got paid less. If the school wants to grow revenue through the summer then they need to change how they view summer teaching.

Comment: For the subcontracting furloughs and layoffs, there hasn’t been any unusual layoffs or furloughs over last summer. Sodexo usually furloughs when the students are off-campus. Looking ahead to this year it will be hard to say what things will look like. We have a different contract with Sodexo which is no longer fixed fee, it is a cost-plus contract. After November when students go home and might not come back until potentially February, it will look a lot more like the summer. Since it is a cost plus contract it will be more of our decision. Right now, we are building on an assumption that, just like our employees, the Sodexo workers are part of our community and furloughs and layoffs are a last resort.

Discussion of new Sodexo Contract

Attendance: A.K Nandakumar, Grace Zimmerman, Joel Christensen, Susan Dibble, Sue Lanser, Pu Wang, Monika Mitra, Davide Pettenuzzo, Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Elanah Uretsky, Sabine Von Mering, Carol Osler, William Flesch, Ilana Szobel, Dimitry Kleinbock

Guests: Sam Solomon, Cornelia Kammerer, Stew Uretsky, Jytte Klausen

Absent: Rajesh Sampath, Liuba Shrira, Gordon Fellman, Arthur Holmberg